

# PEOPLE & THINGS *By ATTICUS*

**L**AST Tuesday, after I had been to the theatre, the fog was so thick that I had to walk in front of the car in order that the driver, by keeping his headlights on me, could maintain his course. Science, I thought, can invade the stratosphere but it cannot disperse a fog. We seem to have got our priorities wrong.

The next night came the dreadful railway tragedy. Let us hope that the public's anger will help to get those priorities right. If the fog is unconquerable then let us at least deal with its effects. This is the challenge to our laboratories.

## Savage Brethren

**T**ONIGHT the Savage Club will hold its centenary dinner. It was founded on October 12, 1857, the period of the Indian Mutiny and four years before the American Civil War.

When, twenty-one years ago the club moved from the colourful unrespectability of Adelphi Terrace to the dignity of Carlton House Terrace, many feared that the character of the club might be lost, but happily it was not so. As the club's historian, Reginald Pound observes: "While we are glad of our fine window view of a main thoroughfare of pomp and circumstance, we do not subserviently breathe its air."

Nor are the Savages unduly impressed by such memories of the building they now occupy as that a Shah of Persia fell down the great stairway, or that King Edward VII was entertained by one of the "less inconspicuous American Ambassadors."

Except on formal occasions the stately greeting of "Brother Savage" is not used but on the whole the club has managed to maintain an atmosphere of intellectual vagabondage against all the inroads of respectability.

## Flea Man

**Y**ESTERDAY was the ninety-sixth birthday of the world's greatest expert on fleas. Dr. Karl Jordan, the distinguished entomologist, is recognised as being fifty years ahead of his time; fortunately he has lived long enough for his fame to catch up with him.

As an unknown young teacher in Germany, Dr. Jordan was brought to England in 1893 by the second Lord Rothschild, an eccentric young man who spent most of his time in the Natural History Museum when he should have been in the House of Commons. Jordan was to be Curator of the Insect Section of Rothschild's museum at Tring, and his first task was to "arrange, determine and classify" 300,000 beetles.

Jordan's interest in fleas was



PROFESSOR JORDAN

Douglas Glass

initiated by Charles, Lord Rothschild's younger brother. They published a joint work on the systematics of fleas, and their partnership became world-famous.

Karl Jordan has spent sixty-four years at the museum at Tring. By 1930 he was organising it altogether, and when the British Museum took it over he went with it. Now, though he has retired, he still lives at Tring and goes to the museum to work almost every day.

He has just finished, I am told, "a very difficult paper on a group of fleas which completely stumped other workers at the British Museum." On his nineteenth birthday someone asked Dr. Jordan to describe his favourite dream. "Beetles," he said promptly. "Beautiful beetles, with tough elytra, crawling near the base of the trees in the woods at Alstedt."

## Church House

**L**OOKING at the proceedings of the Bank Rate Inquiry at Church House makes one hope that some day there will be published a history of this remarkable building which nestles in Dean's Yard in the shadow of the Abbey. It was there that the Commons met after the House had been destroyed by Hitler's bombs and there many stern debates took place. Perhaps the most painful of them was when the Prime Minister had to announce the sinking of the Prince of Wales and Repulse.

It is also in Church House that the Conservative M.P.s and peers meet in union, if not always in unity, when the appointment of a new Party Leader has to be approved. Here many important international conferences have been held, both official and un-

official. Billy Graham addressed a great audience of clergy in Church House and Dame Edith Sitwell has read her poems to an admiring audience in one of the smaller auditoriums there. The Parker Tribunal was preceded by an even less ecclesiastical inquiry—the Lynskey Tribunal. And incidentally the Church of England does hold its chief assemblies there.

## Back from Cyprus

**W**HEN, a few days ago, Field-Marshal Sir John Harding gave a confidential talk to a few of us on the situation in Cyprus, it occurred to me that his voice has an extraordinary similarity to that of Anthony Eden; nor does the likeness end there. Like Sir Anthony, his face assumes a pensive and even wistful smile at the moment when he is most serious. I imagine that both of them have the same hatred of a "scene." Also like Sir Anthony, the Field-Marshal finds peace and forgetfulness in gardening.

A striking thing about Sir John's appearance is a silver line of hair at the sides of his head just above the ear. It gives an effect of elegance rather than of age. But studying the Field-Marshal's face as he talked to us we sensed in his expression, rather than his words, the emotional strain of his long struggle in Cyprus. Yet he uttered no bitter words.

## Coward in 8 Languages

**I** HEAR from New York that Mr. Noël Coward is enjoying himself hugely on Broadway in the self-created part of Sebastian the vicarious, cosmopolitan butler in "Nude With Violin."

Sir Miles Thomas, who discussed the play with Mr. Coward in his super-heated dressing room at the Belasco Theatre, tells me that the American audiences are particularly impressed by the butler's linguistic versatility. At a great rate, but with sharply-focused articulation audible at the very back of the house, Sebastian harangues effectively on the telephone in French, Spanish, Portuguese, German and Italian.

In addition, he has a blazing row in Russian with a would-be legatee of his late master, and even respectfully acknowledges condolences in Chinese.

I am told that every language is genuine except the Chinese. When Mr. Coward had what he wanted to say translated into this language he found the sounds excessively dull, so now he happily invents suitably oriental noises, each time varying the length and intensity of

the deception to suit his own mood. The houses love it.

## It's an Ill Fog . . .

**T**HE architect's model for the plan to ease the traffic problem of Hyde Park Corner is now on view. The plan is simplicity itself. Somewhere in Piccadilly on one side, and Knightsbridge on the other, the traffic goes underground. Thus the surface north-bound and south-bound cars and buses will no longer be caught in the maelstrom that exists today. It is none the worse for being a simple idea but of course is only a local palliative of a general problem.

If, any day, you stand in one of the main roads into Central London (say, Brompton Road or Bayswater Road on the west) between eight and ten in the morning, you will see an endless stream of cars pouring in, most of them carrying only one person and most destined to occupy road-space by parking all day. On Wednesday, when a fog-belt round London made most of these people travel by train, the traffic problem in the West End was automatically solved. An artificial fog-belt is hardly a practical answer, but parking-meters may well be.

## Entr'acte

**ERIC** HEIDSIECK'S Recital last night at the Wigmore Hall was in effect a farewell to the piano for the next two years. He has to pay the penalty of youth and do his national service in the French Army. He takes the interruption of his career philosophically. In fact he has been so completely absorbed with the piano that it may do no harm in his interpretative development to learn that there are other worlds than that of music.

His father, M. Charles Heidsieck, of the famous champagne family, who is now in London, admires his son's accomplishments but no doubt has the natural regret of seeing him stray from the vineyard. At the wedding of Miss Vivien Leigh's daughter, Eric with his great height towered above us.

## Kilt and Trews

**I** DON'T want to inflame a controversy that already threatens the foundations of the Act of Union, but one thing strikes me about the latest episode in the War of the Glasgow Regiment Succession. By what authority does the Secretary of State for War peremptorily order the Honorary Colonels of the Highland Light Infantry and the Royal Scots Fusiliers to resign their colonelcies? So far as I am aware, honorary colonels are appointed by the Queen under the Prerogative. Now a departmental Minister virtually dismisses them because their solution to a problem they were enjoined to solve is not the War Office's solution.

Atticus's solution, by the way, is to have both regiments wear trews under the kilt.

## People and Words

I am afraid that hellfire and damnation hold no terrors these days.—LORD JUSTICE DENNING.

Since the war about 200 British theatres have been destroyed, shut, or converted into cinemas—but in Germany fifty new theatres have been built.—LORD ELMER.

Considering what a terrible flop women have been in the House of Commons I cannot see that coronets would make them any more effective.—MRS. GRACE LORRAINE.

The function of the House of Lords is to act as a look-alike to wild and erratic bowling, whether delivered by Right-handed or Left-handed bowlers.

—LORD BARKER OF BRIMLEY.